

# Intermountain Trails

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## Forest In Focus: Manti-La Sal National Forest

### Forest Supervisor—Mark Pentecost



Manti-La Sal Forest Supervisor,  
Mark Pentecost

Welcome to the Manti-La Sal National Forest. In this issue of Intermountain Trails you will get a glimpse into our communities and our work. You can view scenes from Conservation Days, a conservation education program that has been presented to fourth graders for 22 years. This kind of community engagement motivated volunteers to build a boardwalk that makes access to a popular fishing location easier.

There are stories about coal, stories that are unique to the Manti-La Sal. The coal reserves on National Forest System lands in Utah yield the largest return to the federal treasury from the National Forest system. Yet, a casual visitor to the Manti-La Sal National Forest may not even know there is a coal mine nearby. Coal is mined underground here, with very space-efficient portals. Impacts to natural resources are minimal.

Come see for yourself. You will be able to experience world class recreation opportunities, and enjoy the breathtaking scenery on the Manti-La Sal National Forest.

Manti-La Sal National Forest  
599 West Price River Drive  
Price, UT 84501  
(435)637-2817

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#### TRAIL STORIES

*Hike Huntington Canyon-see page 2*



### Hike Huntington Canyon

Visitors to The Energy Loop National Scenic Byway were invited to hike the nine beautiful trails of Huntington Canyon in celebration of Get Outdoors Day June 9, 2012.

Only 17 days later, fire raged through the canyon. Though the fire burned only 10 miles of the 101-mile national scenic byway corridor, the effects were profound.

Floods and mudslides followed the fire. Many trails and campgrounds were washed out.



Crews install cribbing in steep terrain along a washed out area of trail.

What does it take to restore favorite trails after fire and flood? Downed trees have to be cleared away, and then cleared away again and again. Maintenance and construction of water control structures are necessary to keep trails from washing out under the floods that occur frequently. Crews must widen, reroute and install cribbing in places that have become unsafe.

Beginning in 2011 before the fire, Rod Player of the San Rafael Back Country Horsemen sought funds and people to help improve non-motorized trails. Working with Bill Broadbear, recreation manager of the Ferron-Price District of the Manti-La Sal, and leaders of other organizations, he has helped rebuild most of the trails in Huntington Canyon since the Seeley Fire.

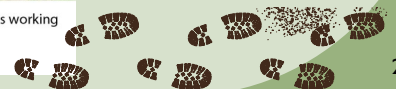
Such a challenging project has required the time and energy of many people. Nine members of the San Rafael Back Country horsemen contributed 120 person days; Dedicated Hunters contributed 15 person days; American Conservation Experience worked 400 person days; and Utah Conservation Corps worked 200 person days. Working with six Forest Service employees, they have maintained and rebuilt 137 miles of trail. Most of the trails can be easily accessed from SR-31 along the Energy Loop National Scenic Byway.



Building trail structures on a steep section high above Huntington Creek.



San Rafael Back Country Horsemen pack supplies into crews working on trails in Huntington Canyon.





## Partners Provide Better Access to Fishing Spot

Most folks who fish don't worry about whether they can get to their favorite fishing spot. But for someone confined to a wheelchair or unable to walk rough ground, fishing might be out of the question.

With those people in mind, the Manti-La Sal National Forest, Skyline Mine employees, and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) joined forces to reconstruct a boardwalk at Beaver Dam, a little reservoir along the Energy Loop National Scenic Byway (SR-264). The boardwalk had fallen into disrepair and was no longer useable.

Thirty-one volunteers from the mine contributed 410 hours to the project earning credits for UDWR's Dedicated Hunter Program. They built 100 feet of boardwalk along the north shore of the reservoir, using materials supplied by the Manti-La Sal National Forest.



The boardwalk at Beaver Dam had fallen into disrepair and was mostly underwater and unusable. Skyline employees saw the need and volunteered to rebuild it.



Boardwalk near completion. It was dedicated July 10, 2014.



Skyline volunteers build structure to support boardwalk at Beaver Dam.



Most demolition and construction was done while wading in water.

## Safety Tips: Take a map



Know where you are going, take a map with you on your next adventure on the forest!



## Coal and Electricity

The Energy Loop National Scenic Byway wends its way through the Manti-La Sal National Forest on the Wasatch Plateau in central Utah, along state routes 31, 264 and 96. As you drive the byway, you will be stunned by the scenery and surprised that industry coexists with a beautiful natural setting.

The economy and culture of the people of Central Utah have been shaped by the resources found along the byway -- coal, water, vegetation, wildlife and scenic landscapes. Coal and power generation have dominated both the economy and culture. The clean-burning high quality bituminous coal found on the forest is preferred for electricity generation.

As you travel west of Huntington, Utah along SR-31, you will see the coal-fueled Huntington Power Plant that generates 906 megawatts of electricity. Owned by PacifiCorp Energy, the plant burns 3 million tons of coal per year supplied to the plant by a 2.4 mile-long conveyor from PacifiCorp's Deer Creek Mine.

Driving 23 miles farther toward the summit of the plateau, you will arrive at Electric Lake. The lake supplies water to the power plant where it is converted to steam and piped to a turbine where it turns blades to engage a generator producing electricity. Electricity leaves the plant transmitted on 345-kilovolt transmission lines.

Deer Creek Mine is one of three coal mines currently operating along the Energy Loop. Only one, Skyline Mine, owned by Bowie Resources, LLC, can be viewed from the byway.

Skyline Mine is located five miles southwest of Scofield, along SR-264. Byway travelers can see the mine portal and surface operations, including a 2.1 mile-long covered conveyor that transports 1,270 tons of coal per hour from the mine site to the company's train loading facilities. Skyline Mine produced 3,135,000 tons of coal in 2013 and employed about 250 miners.

Rhino Resource Partners' Castle Valley Mining Complex includes mines located in a side canyon off the scenic byway. The Castle Valley Mining Complex produced 875,000 tons of coal in 2013.

Improvements in mining technology have steadily increased production from Utah's coal mines. Mines produced an average of 15 tons per day in the early 1900s and can now produce more than 10,000 tons of coal per day.



The Huntington Power Plant owned by PacifiCorp Energy generates 906 megawatts of electricity.

About half the coal produced in Utah is transported by rail and half by truck. Although coal was first mined on the Plateau in 1874, mining did not become a successful industry until 1878 when the first railroads were completed to carry coal to markets in the cities.

### Manti-La Sal National Forest Coal Facts

**2013 Production:** 4,412,728 tons or 45% of the coal mined in Utah

**Sales Value:** \$185,855,717

**Royalties, etc. paid to the U.S. Treasury:** \$13,494,738

**80% of the electricity generated in Utah during 2013 was produced by coal.**

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## Conservation Days at Old Folks Flat

Every spring, about 330 students travel the Energy Loop National Scenic Byway to attend Conservation Days presented by the employees of the Manti-La Sal National Forest and the Utah Association of Conservation Districts at Old Folks Flat Campground.

For 22 years, fourth graders from Carbon and Emery counties have come to the Manti-La Sal National Forest just before school ends in May. Not only do they enjoy a great field day running and playing in the outdoors, they come to learn and remember lessons taught in the school year. It's a full day. Everyone leaves tired, but having learned something new.



Playing with water takes on new meaning at the watershed trailer where students build hills, valleys, and communities from plastic sand. Then they release water along their "watersheds" to see what will wash away and what remains.



Kids love wildlife, but few have ever seen the skull of a wild animal. Kids are introduced to skulls, antlers, horns, claws, and tracks.



Students at Conservation Days learn to throw arrows using the atlatl.



Kids love the macroinvertebrates they learn about at Conservation Days. Few have ever seen such creatures.



## Tragedy in the Coal Fields

May Day 1900 will forever be remembered as the day the Winter Quarters Mine exploded in a blast of burning coal dust, killing 200 miners. In the little town of Scofield, along The Energy Loop National Scenic Byway (SR-96), there lies a cemetery; mute evidence of the cost paid that day. If you walk among the headstones, you will be shocked at the many markers with the same surname – fathers, brothers and sons were killed together that day. If you notice birth dates you will see markers for very young boys, some only 10 years old, who worked in the mine and lost their lives that day.

As you travel SR-31 about 15 miles northwest of Huntington, Utah you may see wreaths arranged along the roadside. If you leave the main road and travel south you will find yourself at the Crandall Canyon Mine Portal (now closed). A short walk will take you to a little aspen grove where nine miners are memorialized. Six were trapped Aug. 6, 2007, when the mine collapsed. Three of their rescuers died on Aug. 16, when the mine “rib” exploded outwards. Ultimately, none of the six miners were recovered. The Crandall Canyon Memorial is a solemn tribute to their lives and the tragedies that haunt coal mine history in central Utah.



Miners killed in the Crandall Canyon Mine Disaster are memorialized in a grove near the mine portal.



Most of the graves of miners killed in the Scofield Mine disaster of 1900 are marked with wooden headstones; newer markers were placed in 2000 as a commemoration of the tragedy.



Marker along the trail to the Crandall Canyon Memorial.



Winter Quarters Mine in the early 1900s.

Photo courtesy Western Mining and Railroad Museum

## Coal Mining in the Environment

When a coal mine is permitted, the Forest Service is responsible for prescribing necessary conditions to protect non-mineral resources on surface lands within the National Forest System. It must ensure that exploration, development and production are done in an environmentally sound manner. The Forest Service also assures that lands disturbed by mineral and energy activities are reclaimed for other productive uses when mining is concluded. (FSM 2800.)

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for issuing coal leases. The leases are subject to stipulations the Forest Service prescribes to protect non mineral resources. The BLM requires operators to achieve maximum economic recovery of the coal resource.

States have the primary responsibility for issuing surface mining permits and managing surface mining activities to protect water resources, wildlife habitat, air quality, vegetation and cultural/historic resources. This includes monitoring and mitigation requirements and setting standards for returning the land to acceptable uses after mining.

Due to the unique geology and little surface exposure of minable coal seams, an underground mine may have a very small surface footprint compared to the amount of activity occurring underground. For example, Canyon Fuel's Skyline Mine has more than 10,000 acres of coal leases for mining while disturbing only 122 acres on the surface.

Through the mine permitting process, mining companies are required to enter into a partnership with state and federal regulatory agencies and the public to minimize impacts on the environment and restore the land to a natural state when operations are concluded. (Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.)

Recently, the Manti-La Sal National Forest joined the Utah Division of Oil Gas and Mining to inspect a reclaimed mine site owned by PacifiCorp. Mining first began there in late 19th century. Over the years the mine workings were sold to various owners and it became increasingly industrialized until it was finally idled in 1987. Reclamation began in 1999. Today the reclamation is complete. The land contours look like the other hillsides and drainages; vegetation is diverse and exceeds the standards set in the reclamation plan.



PacifiCorp's DesBeeDove Mine prior to reclamation.



DesBeeDove mine site after reclamation



## Regional Forester's Message

